E 392
.B565

Class E392

Book .B565

MR. BIGELOW'S DISCOURSE

ON THE DEATH

OF

PRESIDENT HARRISON.

Printed by Israel Amsbury, Jr.

MAN'S FRAILTY, AND GOD'S IMMUTABILITY.

A DISCOURSE,

PREACHED IN TAUNTON,

On Friday, May 14th, 1841,

THE

DAY OF NATIONAL FAST,

IN

COMMEMORATION OF THE DEATH

OF

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON,

LATE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

BY ANDREW BIGELOW,
Pastor of the First Congregational Society in Taunton.

"Know ye not that there is —— a Great Man fallen this day in Israel?" II Samuel III. 38.

TAUNTON:
Printed by Israel Amsbury, Jr.
1841.

E392
.B565

1 4290
20

The following Discourse, though published at the request of friends whose approbation is valued and whose wishes are ever entitled to respectful consideration, the author would not have ventured to put to press were it not for the desire expressed that a memorial should be preserved of the notice taken in this place of an event so painfully distinguished as the Death of the late President. The discourse, with all its defects, may answer this end. It will serve to show the mournful interest felt by the preacher and those whom he addressed in that afflictive dispensation; and that they shared by sympathy in the wide-spread sorrows of their fellow-citizens under such severe national bereavement.

It may be proper to premise at the same time, in explanation of the limited range of topics embraced in the following pages, that the author had previously addressed his Congregation exclusively upon the same subject in his sermon delivered on the Annual State Fast, Thursday the 8th of April.* As he was unwilling to repeat the sentiments then advanced, he avoided, so far as possible, their introduction into his discourse of the 14th of May; and where the recurrence could not be prevented, he was careful to present his reflections under other forms. The length of the performance compelled the omission of several pages in the delivery; and these have been supplied from the author's notes in the order and shape as originally prepared.

In view of the many eloquent tributes to the memory of the lamented Harrison—worthy at once of the Subject, and the gifted eulogists—it can inspire no enviable emotions in the bosom of him who submits the production herewith offered to the public eye, to reflect on the broad contrast it exhibits in the scale of merit. He presents it accordingly with the distrust inevitable to such consciousness. Proud he would otherwise be of laying an

* The text was selected from Psalms, cxlvi, 3–5. Intelligence of the death of President Harrison reached Taunton on Tuesday the 6th of April, in 56 hours from Washington. He expired in that city on Sunday morning at 1 o'clock.

offering—proud of an opportunity of casting a bare *pebble*, if nothing more, on the Monumental Mound—the mighty sepulchral *Cairn*—reared by a nation's gratitude over the ashes of one of her best and bravest and noblest sons.

To the public who lent him an indulgent audience on the occasion which called for the ensuing discourse—to those of his respected parishioners whose kindly approval of his humble endeavors to pay due honors to the Illustrious Dead, has been evinced by their request for the present publication—and to his estimable friend, Chief Justice Williams, (acting as their organ,) for the obliging terms in which such request was communicated—the author tenders in return his grateful acknowledgments.

DISCOURSE.

"Behold I die, but God shall be with you."
Genesis, xlviii. 21.

We are assembled, my friends, on an occasion which revives affecting memories. But we are come together at a time more favorable to calm reflection, than when on a former day, some few weeks since, we met in this place to ponder on the painful dispensation to which I allude,—that solemn National Bereavement which called our country to mourn the sudden demise of her venerated Chief Magistrate.

The shock of the first tidings was naturally overpowering. It came with a whirlwind rush. Who can forget its intensity and force?—The ground seemed to quake at the thundering crash of the catastrophe. The pillars of the Republic shook at the sound thereof. The curtains of the land trembled!

In such an hour, vain were the attempt to gather up and set in order the collective lessons and admonitions which the bereavement was sent to teach. The *fact*—the stern, naked fact—stood out in unquestioned shape to every man's discernment, that our President—that Harrison—was dead! But it stood *so close*,—that dreadful fact—looming like a dark spectral form in huge dimensions before our eyes, that it seemed to fill the whole space of vision. We gazed—and our souls were humbled and awed. We gazed with hearts sickened—chilled by the frigid atmosphere condensed from the cold icy breath of death which

was wafted around us. All we could know, could feel, was the harrowing consciousness that we stood in the presence of man's dread leveller,—that we were confronted, eye to eye, under the withering glance of the "pale monarch of the Tomb." The seat of power, the loftiest in the land, which a little before was seen filled with the state-robed form of our Country's Chief, was suddenly dispossessed of its proud occupant. Looking again, we saw enthroned the usurping figure of the King of Terrors, scowling with wrathful brow,—his red right arm laid fearfully bare in judgment, and his ruthless dart brandished in terrific triumph before our aching sight. Yes, Death there reigned with mournful pomp, gloating upon the spoil—that noble spoil—which he had plucked with remorseless grasp to enrich the trophies,—already too multiplied,—of his insatiate conquests. Our eyes were rivetted; our souls were struck aghast: We felt, every man of us, our own personal weakness, frailty and insecurity; and scarce another sentiment could our hearts embrace than that borne home by a voice from the invisible world, proclaiming—"Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity."

But time has mollified the sharper sensations of pain and terror and surprise. It has tranquillized our troubled spirits. The tide of a nation's grief, if it still flows deep and strong, now glides with noiseless course. No longer is it chafed upon its surface. No longer does it overpass its proper bounds, or sweep impetuously with headlong violence over the length and breadth of the land. It is settled and reduced, daily working itself clearer, and already become a sedate and tractable current. And we from our present position, having receded thus far along the stream of time from the

date of the afflictive event, are enabled to look back with sobered feelings upon the occurrence itself, to compare it with other like visitations from the hand of the Almighty, to weigh its consequences present and future, and to read and interpret the instructive monitory lessons which God in His providence is thereby speaking unto us.

I have chosen for my text the dying exclamation of a venerable man of ancient times,—a man of renown,—the patriarch Jacob, uttered on his affecting leave-taking with Joseph, the child of his parental pride and object of his tenderest paternal love: "Behold I die," said he, "but God shall be with you."—The circumstances under which this language was used, demand a brief notice, for the purpose of showing more distinctly the adaptedness of the passage to the present occasion.

Jacob at this juncture, was old and "well stricken in years." "The time drew nigh," (Moses tells us,) "when Israel must die." The event was a thing of course, following in the appointed order of nature.—Jacob's old age was comfortable and honorable. In outward circumstances he was prosperous. Instead of the impoverishment which at one period had threatened him, he had—by a sudden and unlooked for turn in his fortunes—been raised to a condition of ease and affluence. His posterity, already numerous, were in flourishing estate. They dwelt in a fertile district of the land of Egypt, living in peace and abundance.—The aged parent was looked up to by them with affectionate veneration. He was honored, still more, by Pharaoh and all his court, as the worthy sire of Egypt's temporal deliverer,—the man next in rank to Egypt's sovereign—Joseph, her far-famed viceroy. Yet Jacob

must "go the way of all the earth." Neither wealth, greatness or honors, nor kindred attachments, nor noble alliances could screen him from the inevitable lot of man. The cypress path—that mournful avenue leading downward to the house of death—his feet must tread as surely as the meanest of the sons of flesh.—But not with trembling steps did he approach life's verge. He leaned upon the arm of Abraham's God—content to go where God should lead—not doubting that the issue would be well,—not fearing that he should be guided to a better heritage than earth had offered, and an abode unspeakably more desirable than the terrestrial home he was about forever to resign.

The patriarch was solicitous in his last mortal hours to bequeath a blessing to his offspring. Strong himself in faith, he wished like confidence of trust, and comfort of hope to be shared by those he might leave behind. The faithfulness of God *he* had known by happy experience. Let but his offspring cleave to God and keep covenant with him, let them prove themselves children of faith emulous of its bright rewards, and the heirs of the same, nay even of richer blessings than had crowned his lot, they might hope to become. God would own them in this life as "a chosen generation," His "peculiar people;" and in the world to come, they should share the glory of adoption among the sons of God.

The immutability, in a word, of the everliving Jehovah, was the pillar and ground of the patriarch's faith and hope. "Behold I die," he testified, "but God shall be with you,"—God, the everlasting Father, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, who fainteth not, neither ever is weary. The confidence of the dying believer was justified by the issue. Generations had come and gone after this aged seer's departure from the world,

when Moses, taking up the historic pen, recorded it as the result,—the glorious result,—of all Israel's by-gone experience,—that "the Eternal God *was* their refuge, and underneath them were the everlasting arms."

Having bequeathed the blessing,—first to Joseph, and next to all his progeny,—the patriarch died. For it came to pass, we are told, that "when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he yielded up the ghost and was gathered unto his people." Great were the demonstrations of public sorrow for the loss of so good a man, so venerable a sage and saint and sire. They mourned for him, says the sacred historian, "with a very sore lamentation." The obsequies were solemnized with all the funeral pomp which Theban art and princely munificence and the costliest tribute of filial affection and piety could command or bestow. "With chariots and horsemen, a very great company," the embalmed remains were escorted by the nobles of Egypt to the borders of the realm, and there consigned to the sole custody of the house of Joseph and his brethren. Thence the mournful procession pursued its way to the memorable field before Mamre—that consecrated ground, which sepulchred the dust of Jacob's progenitors. And there, where they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife—there, where they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife,—there, where reposed Leah,—was entombed the reverend form of this man of God,—heir of their virtues, faith and hopes,—with them to rest till the hour of destined emancipation from the dishonors of the grave, then to rise and live and die no more.

Reverting to the text, let us indulge, in the first place, a few reflections on the event announced in the opening clause; secondly, consider it in special connexion

with the mournful case of Bereavement which now fills our land with gloom and our hearts with sadness; and thirdly, remark on the ground of comfort furnished from the concluding sentiment in the text, that,—whereas Man dies, and the excellent, the useful and the honored of the earth must be removed from this mortal life,—yet GOD lives, and He will be with us.

I. Let us reflect on the solemn event announced in the opening words of the text—"Behold, I die:" Thus spake Jacob; and myriads of tongues, in life's extremity, have uttered the same language, with like forecast of the self-same lot when felt to be inevitable and near. I DIE:—Oh what meaning, what depth of meaning, is involved in that little saying! Who can tell the momentous secret? Who can penetrate its dread obscurity? It is a mystery too deep for human solution. In vain has the anxious research, in vain has the sagacious mind, in vain has the boasted philosophy of man, for the space of six thousand years, been exercised on this great problem. Darkness as thick, ignorance as profound, reigns over the subject as when the speculative faculty of human reason first sought to probe the inscrutable enigma. All that we are apprized of, beyond the scanty lights of revelation—which last relate chiefly to the moral issues of the present existence considered as a state probationary—all else we are apprized of distinctly, is, what is presented to outward observation. It is confined to the few simple phenomena, palpable to sense and totally variant in their character—the discriminative features, we mean, pertaining respectively to Life and Death. In the first man takes shape, and emerges to the scenes of active, visible existence. He comes forth on the world's broad theatre: He breathes, feels, moves—walks the earth's surface with firm and

elastic foot—mixes in its bustling scenes—tastes its mingled cup of pains and sweets—converses with other beings like himself—and by his material organs of sense, communicates with, or is made cognizant of, the diversified structures and bodies with which he finds himself encompassed. He purposes and plans, loves or hates, hopes or fears, struggles and toils successfully or otherwise; and he lives on till the active, breathing, conscious frame,—if no violence precipitate its wreck,—yielding to wear and weakness and sinking into sure decrepitude, resigns its functions one by one, and at length ceases its play and movement altogether. The heart then refuses to pulsate; the vital current freezes in the veins; and the features of the countenance, before suffused with healthful beaming animation, assume the mournful hues and emblems of a change most opposite, which we distinguish by the name of death. The transformation which follows,—so complete in its contrasts, and at once so sad and strange and inscrutable,—the Scriptures describe in familiar but energetic terms, and with a variety of expression inimitable for truth, tenderness and beauty:—"As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth; for the wind passeth over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant: but man," (a "flower"—no vigorous "tree" or firm-set oak,) "man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

Aye, Where!—I have spoken of the phenomena subjected to observation. But these make not up the all

of that wondrous enigma—the living, dying creature, man.

'Tis not the all of Life, to live,
Nor all of Death, to die.

The Bible settles this point conclusively. It teaches, that "there is a Spirit in man:" and that "the spirit shall return to God who gave it." If to God; still, where? Ask Sense, and it answers not. Ask Reason, and she is dumb. The combined wisdom of all human generations is here perplexed, baffled and confounded.

The question of most importance to determine, is, what is the *fate* of the undying spirit? What, of the soul of a man—his responsible soul—which both scripture and the instincts of our common humanity forewarn us, shall by no means share the destruction of the earthly form. It lives, and must live on in no dependent relations upon what is outward, frail and corruptible. Observe the dignified assurance on this point implied by the very language of Jacob:—"I die!" said he:—Who, what dies? His being's self—the sum total of the man? Was that to perish? Was all to become extinct—to be annihilated? Could the patriarch intend such sentiment?—What voice was it which spoke from his lips, when about to leave this world, he ejaculated the saying, "Behold, I die?" Whence came it? From the outer or the inner man? From the body or the body's guest—its indwelling spirit? Came it not from the latter—from the secret chambers of the soul,—the deathless spirit enshrined in the fleshly frame, and which lodged therein, only as a transient occupant, waiting for a remove in the mortal hour to some new abode in a world beyond the grave? What means the expression then—*I die?* Can

it import aught else than a *change* in the mode or condition of being—the percipient nature remaining as before, only introduced into some other situation adapted to its capacities and character? Mark the presumptive evidence of this in the composure with which the good old man contemplates his approaching dissolution. Hear him, like Joseph after him, giving "commandment concerning his bones." He charges his children where to deposit the poor shattered remains of his mortal tabernacle--when its walls, like those of a frail crumbling tenement, battered by the storms or sinking under the weight of years—should be broken down and demolished: He charges them where the mournful wreck—that venerable ruin, should be laid up—namely, "in the cave of Machpelah which Abraham, his grandsire, had bought with the field of Ephron for a possession of a burying-place." He speaks as one impressed with the hope of a sure and joyful resurrection, when the mouldering relics of his now dying body, bequeathed meanwhile to the pious charge of his offspring, should be fashioned anew and built up into a glorious fabric meet for the resumed uses of its old proprietor, the spirit's self. He speaks with the tranquillity at least of one, quitting one residence only to go to another not less desirable and attractive—a change of course, inspiring no regrets in the prospect. And in this he shared the common sentiments of mankind,—nay, rather of the good, in every age. That death, so far from implying a cessation to be, is simply a transition stage, a remove from a visible to some future invisible sphere, with altered conditions merely of the same sentient nature, is instinctly felt and confessed by all. We ourselves, unconsciously perhaps, write it upon the tombstones of the dead, when we say of them, that they "*departed* this life." And it is worthy of note that

when in the gospel history we read of the "decease" which Jesus was to accomplish at Jerusalem,* and also in one of the Epistles of Peter, of the same event (expressed by the self-same term,) anticipated by that apostle as shortly to be experienced by himself,† the word in both cases is found, on turning to the original, to be Exodos,—meaning a departure or going out, i. e. of the soul from its old companion, the body,—in obvious allusion to the migration of the Israelites from Egypt. And the idea conveyed is—one equally beautiful and just—that death *is* simply an exodus,—a passage of the spirit from one world to another, from the life that now is, to a second ordained to follow. Or if more be implied, it denotes a levelling of the clay-built fabric for the purpose of lending the egress appointed to the before imprisoned resident, the soul, that it may journey to its future destined habitation. Death conducts it to issues—from probation to consequences; and a passage it opens for all the righteous to rewards the richest in a brighter world. To them, it is a going from a scene of toils to a place of rest, from a field of conflict to a seat of triumph, from a land of shadows to a realm of light, from an Eden despoiled to a Paradise Regained. The body corruptible they exchange for a form incorruptible; and in dropping the fleshly mortal tabernacle their spirits, when dismissed by death, gain a nobler mansion, a "building of God, the House eternal in the Heavens." The transit, be it for good or evil—a gain or a forfeiture of happiness according to the condition and fitnesses of souls, must, nevertheless, be made. All which constitutes the man,—the vital quickening spirit,---at death departs. It launches forth

* Luke ix. 31.
† II Peter i. 15.

on that mysterious deep from whose darksome borne no voyager ever returns. But, go where it may, there God is. Go where it may—above, beneath, around,—forever and ever—it is enveloped by His spirit as an all-pervading element—an ocean without limit—soundless, shoreless, infinite.

Solemn is the thought, that into such a presence it must go! That death transmits it, naked and all uncovered, yet in other respects unchanged—with all its affections, faculties and propensions, with all its moral habits, and all its dread and awful responsibilities fast cleaving to its elemental substance,—aye, that in such state death shall usher it into the presence of a Being whose eyes are "a flaming fire"—from Him to receive the righteous awards adjudged to its deservings, and to become happy or wretched according as its frame and inclinations are in unison, or otherwise, with the essential purities and everlasting harmonies of the Divine Mind.

Contemplated merely as a separation from earthly scenes and things terrestrial—as a rupture of sublunary ties, a sundering of present companionships, the forceful relinquishment of the toils and projects, the cares and solicitudes, the vanities and vexations, the strifes and emulations, the joys and sorrows of this mortal existence—contemplated in this light, death is an event sufficiently momentous, it would seem, to awaken frequent and serious meditation. But considered in that graver aspect suggested, as the soul's dismission—an accountable agent—into the hands of its Maker and Judge, it is unspeakably more solemn. Proportionably, a more earnest heed and more anxious watchfulness we should exercise, lest it fall upon us unawares—peradventure when we are least expectant of its coming and

all unfitted for the eventful journey to which it shall summon us. It may visit us on a sudden—"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"—blasting at once our secular plans and enterprises, scarfing up the blithesome gayeties and enchantments of this transitory life, and hurrying us to a world where they will find no place. Always its onset threatens; never can it be far distant. No station, age or character, can plead immunity from its quick, intrusive approach. Nought can shield from the sure arrest, or avert the final resistless stroke of death. "Behold," says Jacob, "I, (even *I*,) must DIE."

II. This brings us to the second head of the discourse, namely, the consideration of the event in special connexion with the late National Bereavement we are assembled to mourn.

First keep in mind the illustrative case we have drawn from the sacred volume. Jacob, you observe, shared the general lot of all. Though a descendant of a renowned line,—the illustrious head of a numerous household, by all affectionately cherished and revered,—a man of more than earthly, a *divine* nobility, honored as he was with the title of a "Prince of God,"—a sire whose name in after times was destined to become the glorious patronymic of a people the most extraordinary in its fortunes of all others in human annals,—this Nestor in years—the ancient and honorable—a man eminent for piety and virtue and every ripened excellence which made his hoary head a crown of glory—yes he, that patriarch, must bow to the might of the inexorable Destroyer. His sphere of ease and affluence, his worldly dignities, his outward comforts, his fields and flocks, his friends and home, and the tender charities and soothing sweets of household loves,—all, all he

must resign. Death spared him not. It marked him for its victim; and "Jacob yielded up the ghost and was gathered unto his people."

Go then, nor wonder as ye go, to gaze on a fresher spoil of the universal Conqueror. Sadder it is; but is it more strange? More affecting, we grant it,—more impressive to ourselves by reason of its coming so closely home, and working disappointment and a most painful revulsion in our fond prospective calculations; but it is only an incident natural in the order of Providence and that might be reasonably looked for. It should justify accordingly not more surprise than any ordinary occurrence in the ravages of mortality. With the thousand memorials nevertheless perpetually before us of man's insecure hold on life and all sublunary possessions, it seems that another lesson was wanting—such stern and astounding lesson as God has now given us—to teach more convincingly that affecting truth. It has come to rebuke in loudest tones our pride and confidence in an arm of flesh. It has come to remind us with an emphasis the most impressive, that

> Man is but vanity and dust
> In all his flower and prime.

Few parallels, it must be confessed, have been furnished of like sudden reversal of the conditions of our poor, frail humanity. Here we behold one, recently lifted to a pinnacle of power, loaded with honors, and exulting in the flattering hopes and joyous elations of the most enviable sphere of earthly aggrandizement, now reft of all, stricken down by the insatiate shaft of death. The demise of the late President was an event put out of our calculations. It was not taken into account—seriously so—as among the contingencies of things. Practically, at least, the apprehension was

banished as not turning on the bare possibles in the designing wisdom of Heaven. That our Nation's presiding head, so lately borne with enthusiastic demonstrations of rejoicing to the Chair of State,—he, "the observed of all observers,"—the object of unbounded confidence and exultation to millions of hearts —*our* Country's Ruler—the hero, statesman, patriot, sage—could be thrust down from his proud pre-eminence by the rude presumptuous hand of death—in short, that HARRISON should "shake hands with dust, and call the worm his kinsman,"—it was a notion, we fancied, too idle to be entertained! We almost shared the superstition of his old savage foes, who, when seeing him go forth from successive battle-fields unharmed by the showers of balls that poured their leaden hail about him, thought and called him invulnerable;—so we, in our vain imaginings, believed him protected from the shafts of the Destroyer in any sort, during the term at least of his chosen Magistracy. Yet ere the festive ceremonies which graced his triumph, had all been celebrated throughout the Republic, a piercing note was heard—a funeral knell—"grating harsh thunder" on our astonished ears. It rose and blended with the gratulatory shouts that rang rejoicingly over the land. It told another—a shuddering tale;—that the man—mere man he was—for whom such jubilee was solemnized—that our President was no more! Instead of the official robes in which but a little before, his person was arrayed, another vesture, the shroud of death, enwrapped his pale lifeless form. And a nation bereaved, in the spirit of deep heaviness, clad in the habiliments of woe, gathered with aching awe around his mournful bier.

Look again to the completeness, the suddenness, of the contrast. Compare the brilliant flush of prospects in the outset, with the tragic sequel—the disastrous death-blight—which so speedily followed. God purposed it to stain the pride of human glory. And we are witnesses how vain is the hope of man, when by so dire a catastrophe, in a month—"a little month,"—a Nation's shout of triumph should be succeeded by a Nation's burst of lamentation. The one, the swelling acclamation, rolling over the land like the sound of many waters, had not yet died away: It was still reverberating over hill and dale, and lake and forest and prairie—awakening the echoes of distant mountains—leaping adown the pine-clad vallies of the majestic Oregon and deepening the roar of its tumbling dashing tides:—Still was the sound heaving and undulating, to know no pause till mingling with the answering *sough* on the storm-beat shores of the mighty Pacific:—in that glad hour, a cry was heard, loud and thrilling as when the flower of Egypt was smitten and laid low by the hand of the destroying Angel. It outvoiced the thundering huzzas which rent the air. It proclaimed that death was in the midst—throned in high places. Anon, the pride, the joy, the boast of millions of exultant hearts were withered, broken, crushed. A mournful dirge for a Nation's loss poured forth its solemn wail; and the passing breeze bore in its bosom a country's requiem for her Chieftain's rest.

Still, bells were tolled, and music swelled, and banners streamed, and processions marched, and cannon boomed; but the pageant, in purpose, alas how changed! The marshalled trains,—no more with light step and joyful air as when thronging the track of a triumphal car,—were now wending their way with downcast

looks and measured tread to the doors of the house of death. Mournful was the chime of the pealing bells;—and sad was the drum-beat, its muffled tones falling like lead upon the ear. The waving banners were draped with black, in token mutely eloquent of the weeping character of the parade: and the cannon's sound was but the minute gun that signalled the movement of the slow-paced hearse as it passed to the burial of the mighty Dead.

Talk ye of glory—the world's applause—mere earthly fame? Here learn its value. "The paths of glory lead but to the grave." Boast ye of power—the prize so ardently coveted, so tenaciously grasped when won? How brief—how frail, its tenure!

When on that memorable day, the 9th of February last,—the anniversary of General Harrison's nativity—with the prospect then so near fruition of his approaching elevation to the highest office in the Republic,—he made his entry into the capital of the nation as President elect of these United States,—greeted by the plaudits of the thousand-voiced multitudes awaiting his arrival,—by the ringing of bells, the salutes of artillery, and the welcome more grateful of civic authorities tendered in the presence of statesmen and legislators, a large collective body—among them, men of renown, many of the civil fathers, the *Paladins* of the land—on that proud day, could the personage they met to honor, have foreseen that ere the lapse of eight short weeks,—having in the interval reached the summit of his ambition, having been inaugurated the Chief Magistrate of Seventeen Millions of freemen, having been seated in the Presidential Chair, and lodged in the mansion of state—aye, could he have foreseen that within such brief space, he would be called to resign all his worldly

honors, and go from that princely abode to his last long home, exchanging a palace for a tomb, would his ear have been regaled by the voice of popular applause? Would it have drunk in melody from the pæans shouted in his praise? Would he not have said, like Anthony, with the affecting presage of what so soon and so surely must befal him,

> They tell me 'tis my Birthday;
> But I'll keep it————————
> ————————with double pomp of Sadness?

Nay, not sadness, we will hope: a brighter augury, we trust, may have cheered his heart. Realizing the vanity of things sublunary, looking forward unmoved to the hour when the bright brief vapor of his earthly existence should fade and be exhaled—when the bubble of life—this mortal life—should break, dissolved into Immortality—with a soul armed with faith,—faith in a promised victory over the grave,—and with the conscious elevation of spirit thence inspired, fain would we hope that our departed Friend, on the eventful day of which we speak, might rather have exclaimed, in the forecast of life's hastening close—"Better is the day of Death, than the day of my Birth."

And now that he has passed to his final audit—gone where neither the praises nor the censures of men can soothe or pain his ear,—now, when he sleeps with kings and counsellors of the earth, what is it in the life of Harrison we look back upon with most interest? Is it his valor as a soldier or his fame as a general? Is it his prowess, in war, when fighting in defence of his country's rights and honor,—her freedom, soil, and hearths and altars—he bore aloft her starry ensign in triumph as at the Wabash and the Thames—that *meteor flag* which mid the storm of battle "streamed like the thunder-gust against the wind?"

Or, do we revert with higher satisfaction to his civil services,—to the good he did the state rather in council than the field—in his capacity of Territorial Governor, or as the people's Representative in Legislative halls, or as diplomatic Envoy to a foreign court,—these dignities all crowned as they were, with the brightest wreath a grateful country could bestow, when summoning him to the first station in her gift, she saluted him the nation's Chief? Is it, I ask, his enjoyment of honors like these, united to the manly exercise of the trusts thereby imposed,—that we recall and cherish at this hour with fondest remembrance?

Say rather, is it not the hope he justified of having won the meed of a "good soldier of Christ Jesus,"—that in the evening of his days, if not afore in life's meridian, he opened his ear to the voice of religious Truth; and with a soul athirst for richer happiness than earth can offer, turned for refreshment to the living streams that gush from the wells of salvation? Is it not the belief that *then* at least, (ah, who would grudge him the blest distinction?) he attained and answered to that name—"above all Greek, above all Roman fame,"

Christian, the highest style of man?

What boots it to him aught else he gained? What, the lustre of his heroic deeds? What, the eclat of his hard-earned titles to living or posthumous renown? And what but his hope in Christ and a humble confidence of having a name written on the Book of Life, could sustain his soul and bear it up with constancy and courage in the sudden wreck, and midst the pains and weaknesses, of dissolving nature?

Who is there that reflects not now with solemn joy on the testimony he bore to his "profound reverence for

the Christian Religion;" and "the thorough conviction" he expressed, that "sound morals, religious liberty and a just sense of religious responsibility are essentially connected with all true and lasting happiness?" This testimony he uttered, (and he lived not in vain if only to give it:—His name shall live forever *green*, a name of glory, coupled with the memory of so public and solemn a proclamation:) he uttered it, not amid the pains and glooms of threatening dissolution: He uttered it not when life's margin was foreseen to be near and so shortly to be touched: He uttered it with a voice of strength, in the vigor of health and animation, on that proud day, the palmiest in his life, when standing in the presence of forty thousand witnesses, he took the Inaugural oath. This it was that made his sun when near its dip, "seem larger at its setting." And may we not hope, rejoicingly hope, that it sunk to rise again? That no sooner had it disappeared below our darkened horizon than it emerged to a brighter orient,—in a morning without clouds, the morning of eternity,—and mounted, full-orbed, its destined heaven?

III. I pass to remark in the last place on the comfort derived from the concluding words of the text, namely, that "God will be with us."

Great as is the loss which our country mourns, God's presence is sufficient to make amplest amends, and lighten the gloom of our affliction. Man dies; but the Creator lives: The Omnipotent reigns: "His faithfulness is unto all generations." The hopes we fasten on the creature—like golden weights too weakly bound by brittle threads to a frail sinking prop—we have only to carry up and attach to an everlasting chain linked to the pillars of the Almighty's throne, and then will they be held secure: No one shall fall or perish.

It is astonishing that with our manifold experience of the certainty of other disappointments, we make not God our refuge. Alas, I fear, we have little faith. We distrust the shelter of an Almighty wing. Practically, we live without God in the world. But, has His care of us ever failed? In that darker hour, when our country's political savior—when WASHINGTON was removed from life, we thought that her palladium, nay more, that her tutelary guardian, was withdrawn. The "glory departed," we thought, was in that same hour written upon our walls and muniments. A flood of evils, it was predicted, was shortly to deluge the land. All that was goodly and precious in possession, all the thick-clustering blossoms of hope and promise, we feared, were to be scattered and destroyed. The early overthrow of our civil institutions, the eventual unhingement of the whole social fabric, were reckoned among the consequences pronounced inevitable. Such were the prognosticks when Washington expired.

The country lived, notwithstanding our alarms. It survived that melancholy event and every danger it appeared to foretoken. And in all subsequent vicissitudes, as a gallant bark, under a succession of commanders, it has withstood the buffettings of winds and waves:—Whether in sunshine or in storm, in rough or smooth, gliding o'er placid seas, or sailing through rocky straits —though ever and anon encountering some wild and roaring rapid—still, the Ship of State has bravely sped or plunged; and yet she rides—in safety rides—pursuing her bold and onward way. The retrospect we offer that it may inspire us with gratitude for past deliverances, and teach the lesson of manly faith and hope in God. But by no means should it warrant a fool-hardy confidence and self-conceit, with respect to our fortunes

for the future. Behold, God has cared for us with all this care, despite our undeservings. Haply, He has seen in us sufficient virtue—in the proportion of the "ten righteous men" to the collective mass of the community—to serve as the conservative element, the nation's *salt*, to keep it hitherto from decay. But God is bound to no such maximum of a people's virtue as the pledge of His protection, to insure in perpetuity His mercies. That He has spared us heretofore, demands our grateful wonder. It is a mark—a most signal mark—of His gracious forbearance. God, nevertheless, may any moment open the windows of heaven to pour down the storms of His wrath upon a guilty land. And if we shut our ears to reproof; if we refuse the voice of instruction; if neither from His chastenings we learn submission, nor from His exuberant blessings the duties of thankfulness and obedience;—in a word, if renouncing His yoke and scorning His judgments, we harden ourselves against the Lord and think to prosper,—His vengeful thunders will not always sleep: They will wake, at length, and burst to crush and overwhelm us. God, we should remember, need not so much as smite, that He may destroy. He has only to *refrain* His providence—He has only to call off the guards, His holy angels, from the walls of our Jerusalem, and our doom is sealed:

> We sink, by no judicial stroke of heaven
> But nature's course, as sure as plummets fall.

God is absolute; and may effect His purposes for good or evil, assuredly, without the help of men, separate or combined. He, nevertheless, works by means; and intelligent agents He deigns to employ in the execution of His designs. If He purposes good concerning a people, He knows how and when to raise up the

fitting instruments, and shape and adapt them to His uses. Never will they be wanting when His wisdom shall perceive them to be meet. The age is past when a nation's being, a nation's destiny, or a nation's happiness can be supposed to hang on the breath of any individual. The case was otherwise—God suffered it—in times gone by, times of popular ignorance and degradation. Then an individual, some solitary unit in society, was every thing, and the mass was nothing.—Now, the scale of reckoning is reversed. The mass it is which is the all in all. The mass it is which rules and arbitrates. The mass it is which wills and governs. A citizen, if elevated to a place of power, is only the people's servant,—their creature, and bare official. He is the type of the popular mind, the organ of the popular will, the exponent of the national sentiment. Removed by the stroke of death or otherwise, substitutes are at hand—seldom difficult to find—competent to supply his place. The saying in France, a half century ago—then wickedly applied to sanction a stupendous crime—is yet strictly true, that "if the King, (a ruler,) dies, the nation lives;"—lives, that is to say, till it shall have forfeited the protective care and indulgence of heaven. And so with us, if a President dies, the Republic lives: and hands there are, strong—and heads there are, wise—and hearts there are, honest—and souls there are, virtuous, soundly principled and alive to their country's good—these all are left to us. Enough, in fine, there is of talent and worth and wisdom and integrity and patriotism to meet the wants of the State, and grapple with any supposable emergences, (if God will aid,) that are likely to happen.

It has been sagaciously remarked by an able writer of the times, that "there is always a vast floating capi-

tal of intellect which only requires to be directed into the proper channels to multiply an hundred fold. Great occasions seem always to call forth great minds.—Meanwhile, nature," says he, (or rather nature's God —nature understood in such sense,) "in her boundless and untraceable prodigality, allows much of her noblest creation, the inventive and intelligent mind of man, to *run to waste*." The reflection is encouraging. Observation amply verifies its truth. Let a great crisis occur amongst us, as again and again has been witnessed, and some bold mastering spirit will doubtless start up to cope with its difficulties,—and successfully cope with them—*if* "God be with us." And helpers will not be slack to hearken to their country's call, and lend their noble energies in the hour of her distresses to aid in breasting the storm and carrying the nation safely through the most formidable passes she may encounter.

So it has been from the beginning: So it will be evermore—if, I repeat, "God shall be with us" a *propitious* Power:—and propitious He will prove if we learn wisdom from His disciplinary providence. Our fathers, with all their other reliances, fixed their trust supremely on GOD. Their children have only to make HIM their Friend, and around their institutions will be reared a bulwark more solid than walls of brass. For the security of all which they hold most dear, they may confide in God, and will find in Him a Defender who is invincible.

That God IS with us, I augur from the impressions produced by the late public Bereavement. I augur it from the noble beatings of the American heart in sympathy as for a common loss, on the demise of our Chief Magistrate. I augur it from the generous appreciation, so widely manifested among men of all classes and all

complexional shades of party sentiment and bias, in respect to the personal worth and high-souled patriotism and eminent public services, both in manhood's prime and the decline of age—all, in a word, that was truly great and good in the character and life of the Chieftain we have come to mourn. I augur it from the instinctive impulse every where beheld, with few exceptions, to adore the Hand of God under such sad solemn dispensation. I augur it from the spectacle this day displayed —a spectacle sublime—of a great nation humbling herself beneath the frowns of heaven, and now in "her weeds and her widowhood"—upon her bended knees —calling upon God to sanctify the smitings of His rod.

Yes, GOD IS WITH US—to day is with us,—to mark the attitude of a prostrate people, falling low at His footstool in reverent acknowledgment of His omnipotent dominion. God is with us, to listen to the suppliant voices lifted in deprecation of His judgments, and with entreaties for the reviving visits of His love. His spirit, I will not doubt, is moving upon the face of the troubled waters—a Nation's tears—to tranquillize its turbid elements, and soothe and hush and sanctify our griefs. "He stilleth the noise of the sea, the noise of the waves, and the tumults of the people." May He send peace to every bosom,—peace to the hearts of rulers and ruled! May heaven's own peace be shed diffusively abroad over a mourning land! And may the mystic Dove which symbolizes its presence, ever with outspread wing, hover in mercy over all its rejoicing habitations!

LIBRARY

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 011 899 778 5